



Song of the Flowering Girls

The Lark and the Reapers

An Elegy on that Pious Dog Hector

Conscience

By REV. DR. JAMES BENNETT

*Presbyterian Minister St. John*

ST. JOHN, N. B.

1900.

[These verses were not published till Dec. 7th, 1898].

## SONG OF THE FLOWERING GIRLS.

The distaff was displaced by the spinning-wheel, which became for many years the chief source of feminine industry and income. The application of the spinning-jenny to the production of linen yarn rendered the spinning-wheel a useless machine, and the women were inconsolable. But then came the flowering of muslin, which furnished employment to women for a long period, during which the following lines were written in celebration of the trade :

Three pretty peasant girls,  
On a knoll in a flowery glade,  
Stitching the pencilled web,  
Sang the song of their trade.

“Quickly the needle ply,  
Nimbly draw the thread,  
Raise the flower high  
On the soft muslin bed.

Mother talks of the wheel  
And its deep humming sound,  
And the laugh of the merry spinsters  
The cottage walls around.

And auntie tells how a sweetheart  
Sat by each spinner's side,  
By the bright fire and clean hearth,  
When came the eventide.

And oh ! it was merry, my sisters, then,  
 In the days of the spinning wheel ;  
 But pleasanter far it is for us  
 Who ply the thread and steel.

A queen's task is ours,  
 And queens all are we,  
 Sitting in our bowers  
 Beneath the hawthorn tree."

Ply the needle quickly,  
 A revenue is ours ;  
 Our imposts are on ladies' necks,  
 Our taxes spring from flowers.

Then each pale flower plant  
 On the soft robe's sides,  
 To adorn the forms of beauty,  
 Sweet babies and sweet brides.

And when the gloamin' comes,  
 And Cupid comes to toy,  
 By his glowing torch a robe we'll stitch  
 To deck the gallant boy.

*Tassagh, County Armagh, 1848.\**



## THE LARK AND THE REAPERS.

The reaper's scythe was sounding  
 In the ears of the golden corn,  
 As he the swathe was grounding  
 In the dewy autumn morn.  
 The stalwart sheaves the binder flung,  
 Behind him banded strong,  
 And the comely stooks with hoods were hung,  
 Lest rains might work them wrong.

Then spake a lark to her callow brood :  
 "'Tis time to flee, my dears ;  
 For the scythe is distant not a rood,  
 And down this way it shears.  
 These men care nought though tender birds  
 Should mourn o'er hopes undone :  
 No pity may we wake with words  
 For the song-birds of the sun."

The little ones their wings did flap :  
 Alas ! they could not fly ;  
 Their hungry mouths they held agape—  
 For food they 'gan to cry.  
 But on came the scythe a-sweeping,  
 While the mother-bird in air  
 Hung o'er the mower, weeping,  
 That he her young would spare.

The scythe just shore the stubble  
 Above their little heads ;  
 While, careless of their trouble,  
 The mower onward treads.  
 But the binder saw, when passing nigh,  
 The little throats upraised,  
 And looked on them with loving eye ;  
 While down the mother gazed.

"Come, Jack," said he, "set up a stook  
 Above these infant birds :  
 It will be writ in mercy's book,  
 In holy, angel words ;  
 And when the little ones are strong  
 They'll tell of kindness done,  
 While, soaring up with joyous song,  
 They look upon the sun."

The mother-lark, and eke her mate,  
 Looked on them from on high,  
 And sung a hymn at heaven's gate  
 Of wondrous harmony :  
 A hymn of blessing on the men—  
 Their hearts they felt its thrill—  
 Who dealt with birds in danger then  
 Dear mercy's gentle will.

## AN ELEGY

ON THAT PIOUS DOG, HECTOR, KILLED BY THE  
HARVEY DOG PELTER.

[A number of years ago, at the conclusion of a congregational meeting in Harvey Church, among other business, it was proposed, in order to allay the disturbance in the church arising from the dogs who accompanied their masters, an appointment should be made of that ancient church officer, well known in the border lands of England and Scotland, called "Dog Pelter." The proposition was carried *nem con.* A notice was put up on the door of the church, with the picture of a dog stretched in death—"Thus shall it be with any dog that enters this house." This pious dog, Hector, was the first to suffer from the Pelter, as saith the elegy].

A dog once lived near Harvey Church,  
Alas, he lives no more,  
The hills no longer hear his yelp,  
The household hearth his snore.

He had a master kind and good,  
And pious, too, I ween;  
Whene'er he went to church, the dog  
Close by his side was seen.

His gravity did edify,  
Both during psalm and prayer,  
He listened as a Christian good,  
Like those assembled there.

Into the sacred sanctuary  
 Came many other whelps  
 Who did disturb the holy day  
 With yowls and barks and yelps.

Wherefore a stalwart "Pelter,"  
 With club they did array,  
 Order to keep among the dogs  
 When they did sing and pray.

"But how shall I keep order  
 Among the dogs that play?"  
 "Whatever dog doth enter here,  
 Him shall ye kill and slay."

On the next holy morning  
 The Pelter took his place,  
 Shaking his blackthorn fiercely—  
 Death to the canine race.

Some sportive dogs an entry made  
 'Mid voice of morning psalm;  
 Down came the Pelter's cudgel  
 Like paving battering ram.

The howl amid the harmony  
 Was horrid to the ear;  
 The song was stopped, and 'mid the fray  
 Arose the cry and cheer.

The unholy pack soon scampered off,  
 Save one—who lay in gore—  
 It was the pious, gentle dog,  
 Whose pulse shall beat no more.

"Alas! alas!" said the minister,  
 "That Hector it should be!  
 I'd rather all the parish dogs  
 Had murdered been than he!"

And then the holy man turned round  
 To hide the tears that crept  
 Adown his cheek. It might not be—  
 He raised his voice and wept.

Now all ye dogs be warned,  
 Keep out of aisle and pew;  
 The preacher's words are gospel truths,  
 But not for such as you.

---

### CONSCIENCE.

In a lowly cot old Mrs. Walch  
 Spun yarn and taught the weans,  
 I trow, some learnin' frae her I got  
 Into my infant brains.

Poor auld body, she had a cat  
 Was growing lank and lazy,  
 And she said to Alec Scott, one day,  
 "I wish you would drown my Daisy."



“Oh, that I will,” quoth Alec Scott,  
 “Come, Jun, along with me ;  
 We’ll drown her in the lint pool,  
 Beneath the willow tree.”

We threw her in the lint pool,  
 And on her piled the sods,  
 And the poor thing sank to the bottom  
 Beneath the dirty clods.

“And oh ! and what is this I’ve done ?  
 I’ve murdered the poor ould cat.”  
 And I slunk away in silence  
 And sat me down and grat.

And when the school gaed out at e’en  
 I turned the other way,  
 The thought o’ the poor auld drowning thing—  
 It would na let me play.

And aye, when I gae by the pool  
 I look the other way,  
 And the old man, aye, is sorry  
 For the boy’s deed done that day.

